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The world in Brussels, Brussels in the world

Brussels Studies fact sheet

Le monde dans Bruxelles, Bruxelles dans le monde. Brussels Studies fact sheet

De wereld in Brussel, Brussel in de wereld. Brussels Studies fact sheet

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Brussels Studies fact sheet. The world in Brussels. Brussels in the world

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1. Foreign presence in Brussels: a dynamic population

1. On 1 January 2015, there were 398,726 foreign nationals in the Brussels-Capital Region who had not acquired Belgian nationality. This represents more than one third (33.9%) of the total population. This proportion of foreigners is three times greater than that observed in the country as a whole (11.1%) and has been rising for several years (28.5% in 2000). The concentration of foreigners in the capital is due to the city's major role in the migratory history of the country.¹

2. Among these foreigners, the number of Europeans is increasing greatly and represents a significant proportion of the population (22.5% of the total population and 66% of foreigners). The number of French nationals and Mediterranean Europeans is increasing, but the most remarkable growth in 2014 was that of Bulgarian and in particular Romanian nationals, who now represent the third biggest foreign population in Brussels following the French and the Moroccans.

3. But many people have acquired Belgian nationality throughout their lives². Previously unpublished information from the National Register concerning the first nationality registered in this administrative database allows insight as regards the nationality at birth in addition to the current nationality. On 1 January 2015, there were 655,450 people in the Region – i.e. 55.8% of the population – whose first nationality was not Belgian. The proportion of people whose first nationality is foreign has been increasing steadily in recent years, amounting to 41.3% in 2000. This population counts a large amount of Congolese, Turks and above all, Moroccans. These have a strong tendency to acquire Belgian nationality, more often than the European Union nationals.

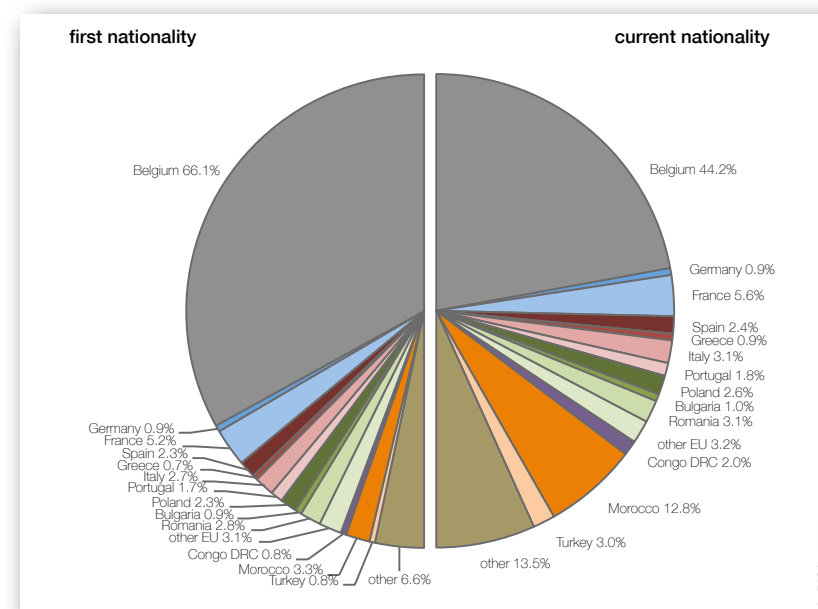


Figure 1. Current nationality and first registered nationality for the inhabitants of the Brussels-Capital Region. The people with Belgian nationality and another nationality are considered as Belgians. The comparison illustrates that, in this case, the notion of foreigner is purely administrative: a foreigner (at time t) is an individual who is not a Belgian national at time t.

Source: IBSA, SPF Economie – Direction générale Statistique – Statistics Belgium.

¹ IBSA, HERMIA, Jean-Pierre, 2015. Baromètre démographique 2015 de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale. In: *BISA Focus* n°11, to be published in December 2015, IBSA, HERMIA, Jean-Pierre, 2015. Un boom démographique à la loupe : Roumains, Polonais et Bulgares en Région de Bruxelles-Capitale. In: *BISA Focus* n°9, June 2015, <http://www.ibsa.irisnet.be/publications/publications-par-serie/focus-de-l-ibsa>

² MYRIA, 2015. *Migration en droits et en chiffres 2015*. Bruxelles, <http://www.myria.be/fr/publications/la-migration-en-chiffres-et-en-droits-2015>.

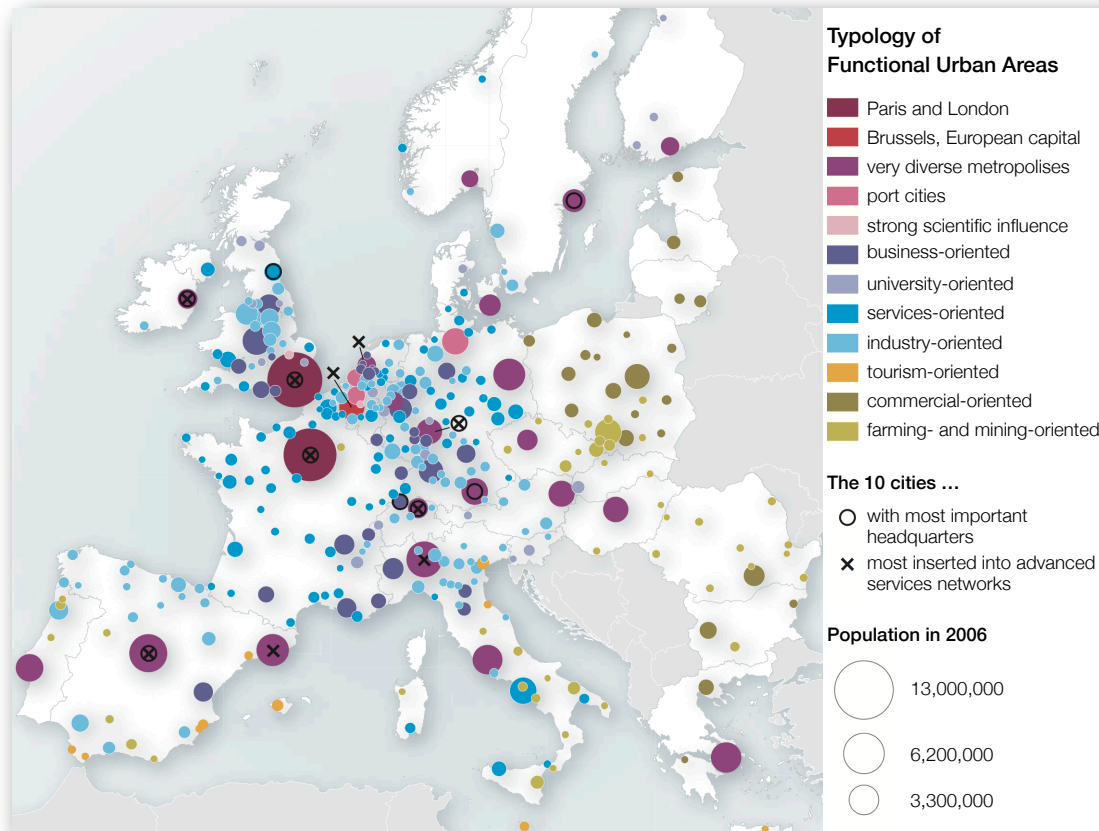


Figure 2. General typology of European urban areas and location of head offices. Defined within the framework of the ESPON programmes, the functional urban areas (FUAs) correspond to the employment areas of one or more cities. Source: Halbert et al., 2012, map made by Rémy Yver, adapted (head offices) by C. Vandermotten.

2. Brussels: a small global city

4. The diversification of the (foreign) population of Brussels is explained in particular by the fact that – despite its modest size – Brussels is a global city.

5. It plays a major role in globalised networks, which implies an economy driven by an administrative and high-productivity services sector. The presence of international institutions in Brussels has a direct and induced impact on approximately 15% of the Region's GNP.

6. But Brussels is an atypical global city, comparable only to Washington: its position is very strong at political level, but more modest as regards steering the global economy³. It is not one of the ten most important European cities in terms of the location of head offices. In reality, it would be included at metropolitan rather than regional level if Leuven was added, with the head offices of INBEV. This also leads to a relatively modest position in terms of research and development, notwithstanding the importance of basic research which is conducted in Brussels: due to its strategic character, the location of research and development (R&D) is very close to the head offices. Once again, the position of Brussels improves in this respect if Walloon Brabant is included, where R&D is driven by the importance of the pharmaceutical sector.

7. In contrast, advanced services have a strong presence in Brussels, acting as the interface between economic management and political leadership, with all that it implies in terms of the presence of lobbyists, embassies, etc.

8. These characteristics of the Brussels economy ensure satisfying and stable growth for the Region, but the other side of the coin is relatively low employment creation, in particular low-skilled jobs. This results in one of the bases for the difficulties faced by the Region, exacerbated by the narrowness of its territorial framework: Brussels creates wealth, but it is redistributed above all in its employment area and the rest of the country. The Region itself has a high unemployment rate, with a population whose income is now significantly lower than the Belgian average, and even lower than the average income per inhabitant in Wallonia. The city has a thriving economy (generating approximately 20% of the GNP) as well as a high level of poverty (its inhabitants dispose of only 8.5% of the national tax revenue).

³ HALBERT, Ludovic, CICILLE, Patricia, PUMAIN, Denise and ROZENBLAT, Céline, 2012. Quelles métropoles en Europe ? Analyse comparée. Synthèse [online]. Paris: Délégation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'attractivité régionale. Travaux en ligne, 11. http://www.datar.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/travaux_en_l_11_synthese_acme.pdf